

Dairy Connect Ireland: Why Technical Managers Should Stay for the Full Programme

The Irish dairy sector is operating in an environment where operational discipline and technical precision have never mattered more. Energy volatility, sustainability compliance, labour pressures and export uncertainty are no longer peripheral concerns. They sit squarely within day-to-day plant management.

Against that backdrop, Dairy Connect Ireland - taking place on 15–16 April 2026 at the BIA Innovator Campus - offers technical managers something increasingly rare: time away from the plant to engage with the wider direction of the industry.

For SDT members attending the Southern Ireland Regional Meeting on Advances in Dairy Processing, the technical programme will already provide depth. Sessions on evaporator and spray dryer efficiency, membrane performance, process water recovery and current research initiatives map directly to the realities of managing a modern dairy plant.

But the value of Dairy Connect Ireland extends beyond the regional meeting.

The broader context

Irish dairy has delivered significant export growth over the past decade. That growth now sits alongside increasing operational scrutiny. Processors are managing tighter environmental standards, more detailed carbon reporting requirements and sustained cost pressure across utilities and raw materials. Engineering decisions are increasingly visible at board level. Capital expenditure on plant upgrades must demonstrate measurable returns. Efficiency projects are expected to contribute to both margin protection and sustainability targets simultaneously.

15 April: Evening networking

Remaining for the evening session provides a setting to discuss these pressures with peers across the value chain. The format is relaxed with a cheese and whiskey pairing. The conversations tend not to be.

Technical managers rarely have time away from the plant to speak candidly with commercial directors, co-operative leadership, research partners and technology suppliers in one room. This is that room. Managing dryer energy intensity, improving CIP performance without increasing downtime, balancing membrane life with cleaning frequency, responding to retailer data requests - these are live issues for most sites, and worth discussing with people facing identical constraints.

Understanding how retailers interpret sustainability metrics, or how smaller producers are managing compliance within tighter capital limits, provides useful perspective when reviewing your own site's investment priorities.

16 April: Full-day forum

The full-day forum broadens that perspective further. Under the theme "**Collaboration and Connection: Embracing Today's Challenges to Harness Tomorrow's Opportunities**," the programme brings together leading figures from across the Irish dairy industry to tackle the structural challenges shaping the sector over the next five to ten years.

A series of seminars delivered by key industry voices will address the issues that matter most to those running dairy operations - from energy and sustainability through to skills, market access and investment confidence. The full programme will be confirmed shortly.

The day costs €20, with lunch included.

The case for staying

The focused SDT sessions address immediate operational questions. The broader forum connects those questions to commercial realities, regulatory direction and long-term investment decisions.

That connection matters when you're building a business case for plant improvements or defending a maintenance budget to a board that increasingly wants sustainability metrics alongside financial returns.

Irish dairy's technical community has never lacked competence. What's harder to find is the time and the setting to connect that competence to what's coming next. Dairy Connect Ireland offers both.

To register and view full event details, visit www.dairy-connect.com/dairy-connect-ireland.